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I, KIM MARSHALL, MANAGER PATENT OPERATIONS hereby certify that annexed is a true copy of the Provisional specification in connection with Application No. PP 7393 for a patent by REAL GUARDIAN A.T.F. THE REAL TRUST filed on 30 November 1998.



WITNESS my hand this
Eleventh day of October 1999

KIM MARSHALL
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System and Method for Timing Golfers on a Golf Course

Background to the invention

A common problem experienced at golf courses is that many golfers are regarded by other golfers and by the course management as playing too slowly. Various means of encouraging, and in some cases forcing slow golfers to speed up have been tried. This invention is intended to raise the awareness of golfers to their pace of play, thereby encouraging them to play more quickly and also to provide evidence concerning how slowly they are playing. It is also intended to counter the feeling among golfers that they are not responsible for the slow play since they are being held up by the golfers in front of them.

Summary

The present invention is directed to a system and method for recording and displaying the time interval between a group of golfers and the group of golfers in front of them. One or more timer units are located at points on a golf course, which points are passed by groups of golfers in the normal course of play. As each group of golfers passes a timer unit, the timer unit is activated and records the time interval between the passing of that group and the passing of the group preceding it. This time interval is displayed by the timer unit, either digitally or by some other means.

In one possible embodiment of this invention, the timer unit is electronic.

A further object of the invention is to provide an input mechanism in order to activate the timer unit. In some embodiments of the invention, this input mechanism might be a button or a detection device which senses the presence of golfers automatically.

A further feature of the invention is for the timer unit to also display a series of the time intervals between successive groups of golfers which had passed the timer unit previously. Therefore members of any group of golfers passing a timer unit are able to see at a glance how far in time they are behind the group in front of them as well as the time intervals between preceding groups. This information is intended to provide help in identifying the reason why any one group of golfers is not as far along the course as they might be.

A still further possible object of the invention is to provide a means of automatically activating the timer unit by means of a pressure pad or an electromagnetic wave sensor or ultrasonic sensor or similar activator.

A still further possible feature of the invention is to provide for the unit to be powered by ambient light.

A still further possible feature of the invention is to provide for the unit to be powered by a combination of ambient light and a battery for storage of energy used by the device.

A still further possible feature of the invention is to provide a printer connected to the timer unit, so that a permanent record of the time displays between successive golfers might be produced.

Brief description of the drawings

Preferred embodiments of the invention are described below by way of example only, and with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which;

Figure 1 is a diagrammatic overhead view of a portion of a golf course showing possible location points for the timer units.

Figure 2 is a view of the display of the timer unit which shows the golfers the time intervals between themselves and the preceding groups of golfers.

Figure 3 is a view of a timer unit which has been mounted next to the path which golfers follow on the course.

Figure 4 is a view of a timer unit which has been mounted next to the path which golfers follow on the course and which incorporates a sensing device within the timer unit assembly.

Description of the preferred embodiment

Referring to Figure 1, timer units might be located at prominent positions (1 and 2) on the tees of, in this case, two holes on the golf course. The timer units should ideally be located such that they are clearly visible to any approaching golfer. Referring to Figure 2, the face of each timer unit has a button (3) and instructions (4) which direct the golfers to activate the timer unit by pressing the button. Immediately after the button has been pressed, the time displays (5) indicate the time intervals between successive groups of golfers. Golfers are further encouraged to activate the timer unit by the fact that their time will not be displayed until the button has been pressed.

Referring to Figure 3, alternatively, the timer unit may be designed to be activated automatically by a pressure pad located such that the golfers will walk over this pad on their way round the course. In this figure a timer unit (6) is mounted on a pole (7) and is connected via an electrical or tube connection (8) to a pressure pad (9) which is located across a path (10). As a golfer walks onto the pressure pad, a pressure sensor integral with the pressure pad, or linked to the pressure pad, performs the same function as the button on the panel, activating the timer unit.

Referring to Figure 4, alternatively, the timer unit may be designed to be activated automatically by an electronically linked sensor arranged such that the golfers will be detected by the sensor as they approach the timer unit. In this figure, a timer unit (6) is mounted on a pole (7) and incorporates an ultrasonic device (11). As a golfer enters the field of detection (12) of the sensor (11), the sensor detects the presence of the golfer and activates the timer unit electronically. In this figure 4, the timer unit would also operate if the sensor operated on other principles, such as infrared light or laser waves or radar waves.

Referring to Figure 5, the time displays (5) indicate the time intervals between successive groups of golfers. In addition to displaying the times between successive groups of golfers, the unit may display the time which the golf course management wishes golfers to aim at as the maximum time allowable between arrivals of groups of golfers.

By raising the awareness of the golfers as to their speed of play relative to the speed of play of other golfers using the course, it is intended that they will tend to play faster, thereby alleviating some of the frustrations which result from slow play. Also, by providing a record of the times between previous groups of golfers, it is intended firstly to counter the feeling among golfers that they are not responsible for the slow play since they are being held up by the golfers in front of them and secondly, to counter the feeling among golfers that there is no evidence that they are in fact playing slowly.

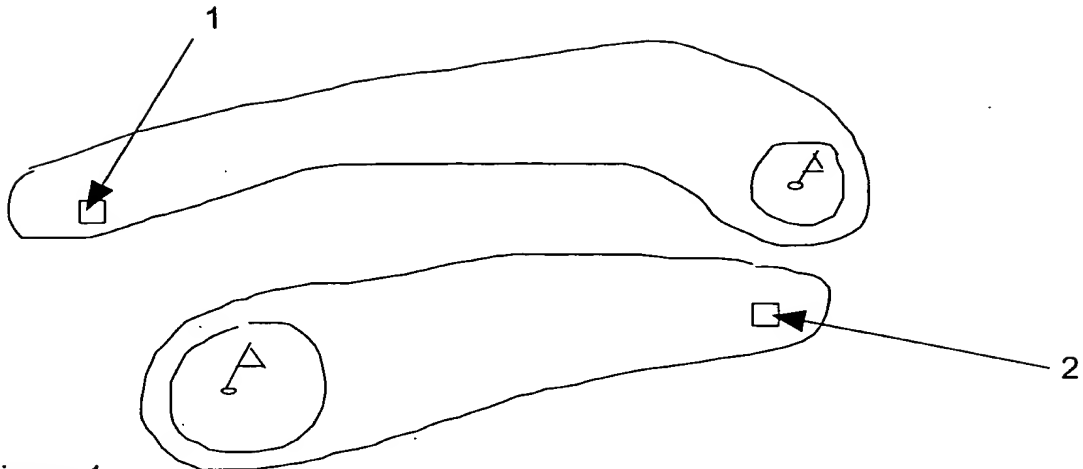


Figure 1

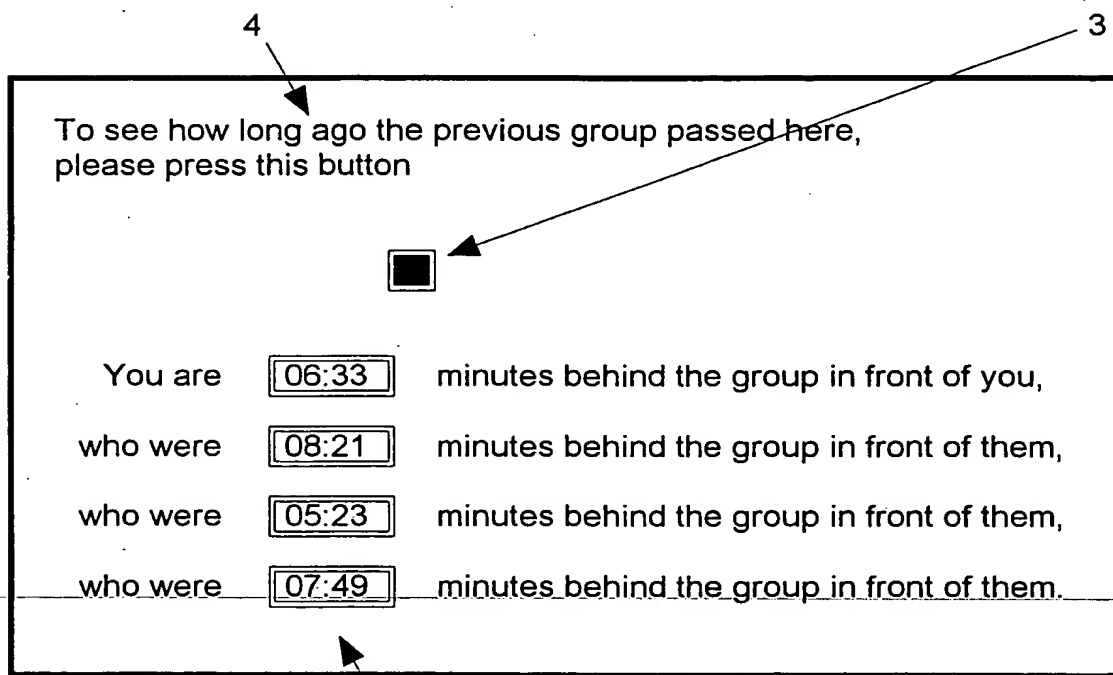


Figure 2

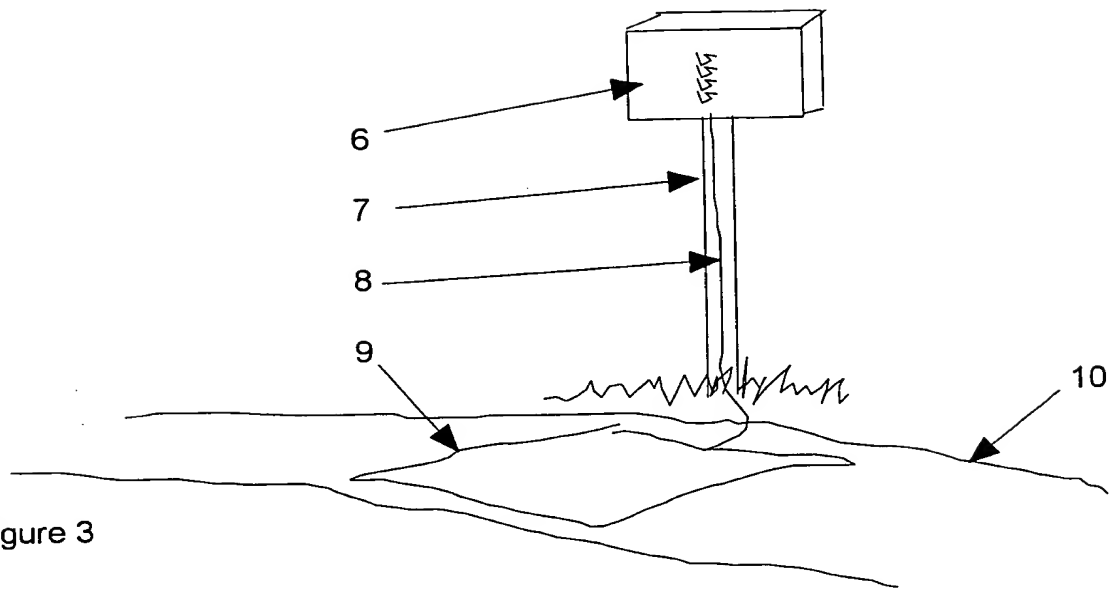


Figure 3

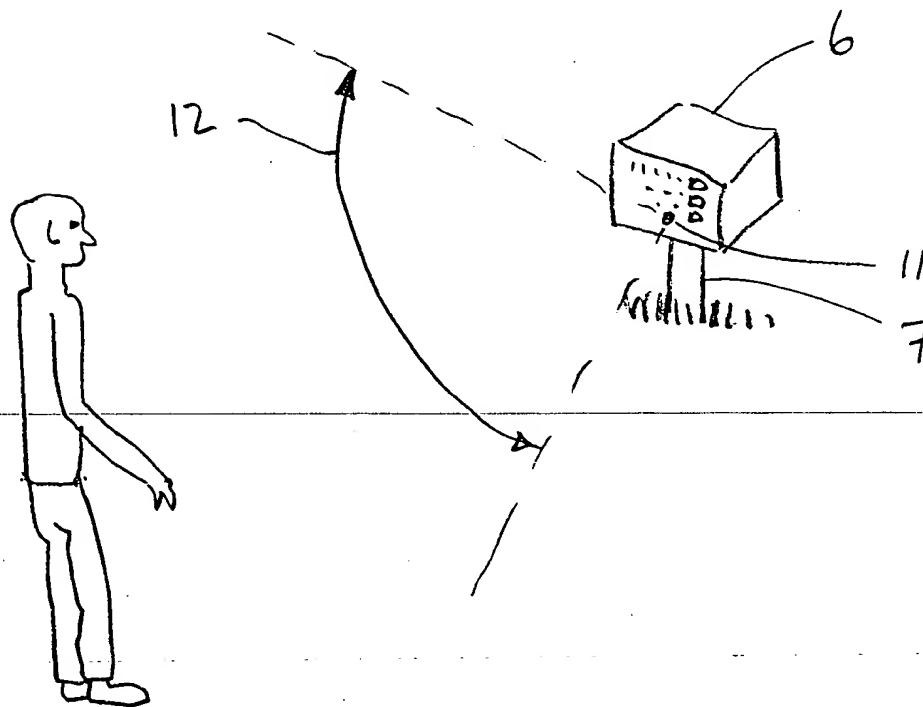


FIGURE 4

The Gentle Reminder

Shows the time gaps between arrivals of groups of golfers.

Minutes to the group ahead of you:

7:43

Minutes to the group ahead of them:

5:51

Minutes to the group ahead of them:

6:34

Minutes to the group ahead of them:

6:38

Minutes to the group ahead of them:

8:21

Please try to keep your minutes gap below:

6:00

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FIGURE 5